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LETTER DATED 15 APRIL 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ERITREA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to forward to you the attached press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea today, 15 April 1999, on Ethiopian bombing of civilian centres in Eritrea (see annex).

At a time when Eritrea and the entire world community is calling for an immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities and implementation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Framework Agreement, the Ethiopian regime continues to reject both, presenting new conditions and thus bearing full responsibility for the continuing war.

The Ethiopian regime has moreover intensified its criminal bombing of civilian centres in Eritrea, including major towns, and continues as well its expropriation, detention and deportation of ethnic Eritreans with impunity. This is a slap in the face of the Security Council and the international community at large, which just two days ago on 13 April reiterated its "call once again for an immediate cessation of hostilities and the implementation of the OAU Framework".

The Security Council cannot be silent when the Ethiopian regime continues to become an obstacle to a peaceful solution in defiance of the Council's insistence "that the parties ... immediately and unconditionally agree to a ceasefire" (statement of 24 February 1999), and also continues its bombing of civilian centres in Eritrea and its crimes against ethnic Eritreans in Ethiopia. Continuing to call or demand for cessation of hostilities by both parties when Eritrea has always called for and accepted it but Ethiopia continues to reject it, not acting when Ethiopia continues its bombing and other crimes against Eritrean civilians is encouraging the Ethiopian regime to persist in its war for wider agendas and its crimes against Eritrean civilians.

Despite Eritrea's will and readiness to resolve the conflict peacefully, these circumstances leave Eritrea no option but to defend its sovereignty and the safety of its citizens by whatever means necessary.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Haile MENKERIOS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Press release issued on 15 April 1999 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Eritrea

Ethiopian jets bomb civilian areas

Ethiopian fighter planes today bombed the town of Adi-Kaieh, the environs of Mendefera and the village of Forto (western Eritrea). The successive bombings occurred from 12:30 to 1:00 p.m.

Eight children were wounded - some of them critically - in the bombings that hit a school in Adi-Kaieh while a nearby church was partially demolished. There were no casualties in the other two air raids.

The high-altitude bombings were indiscriminate.

The Tigre People's Liberation Front (TPLF) regime has carried out the air raid on these civilian targets only two days after the United Nations Security Council renewed its calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities and the implementation of the OAU Framework Agreement, which remains blocked by the TPLF.

The town of Adi-Quala, the environs of Zalambesa, Deda Lalai, Hazemo, Shambiqo, Kinafna and Molki were targets of previous bombings by Ethiopian Antonov, Mig aircraft and helicopter gunships since 6 February 1999, when the TPLF regime violated the moratorium on air-strikes. Twenty-seven civilians were killed and 42 others wounded in those bombings.